



National Park Centennial Initiative

National Park Service
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www.nps.gov/2016



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Press Release

National Park Service Director Mary Bomar to Hold Listening Sessions on National Park Centennial Initiative in San Antonio, Texas

SAN ANTONIO—On March 20, 2007, National Park Service Director Mary Bomar will be in San Antonio, Texas to host a national listening session on the President's Centennial Initiative. The listening session will solicit thoughtful ideas and recommendations from the public for projects and suggestions on how we can improve national parks over the next decade. There are 11 National Park Service units in Texas that conserve natural and historic treasures important to our national heritage, scientific discovery, and public education. Some nearby parks include San Antonio Missions National Historical Park, Big Bend National Park, Lyndon B Johnson National Historical Park, Amistad National Recreation Area, and Padre Island National Seashore.

The listening session, which is open to the public, will be held on March 20, from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM at the City Council Chambers of San Antonio on 103 S. Main Plaza, San Antonio, TX 78205. This is a wonderful opportunity for the public to express their opinions and ideas on how their National Park Service can meet its challenges as it nears its 100th anniversary in 2016.

The President announced the National Park Centennial Initiative on the 90th anniversary of the National Park Service, Aug. 25, 2006. Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne outlined the plan during an event at Yellowstone National Park the same day. The President directed Secretary Kempthorne to establish specific performance goals that will ensure the national parks continue to be places where children and families can learn about our nation's great history, enjoy quality time together, and have fun outdoors.

The initiative calls on the National Park Service to engage all Americans in preserving our heritage, history, and natural resources through philanthropy and partnerships; reconnect people with their parks; build capacity for critical park operations and facilities and sustain them through the next century. Secretary Kempthorne and Director Bomar have launched a series of listening sessions to seek suggestions and ideas from Americans across the country on President Bush's National Park Centennial Initiative to reinvigorate and strengthen national parks over the next decade.

Over the next several weeks, sessions will be held around the nation on the President's proposal to provide up to \$3 billion of new public and private investment to improve and

expand national park conservation, preservation and visitor service programs by the National Park Service's 100th birthday in 2016.

"We will travel the country listening to our fellow citizens who care deeply about our national parks," Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne said. "This is a time for a thoughtful review of what needs to be done over the next decade -- a great opportunity to think big and act boldly to develop a plan to prepare national parks for the future."

Participants are being asked to focus their comments on three vital questions:

- Think of you, your children or future generations enjoying national parks in 2016 and beyond. What are your hopes and expectations?
- What role do you think national parks should play in the lives of Americans and visitors from around the world?
- What are the signature projects and programs that you think should be highlighted for completion over the next 10 years?

Based on these discussions, Kempthorne and Bomar will identify signature projects and programs and set specific goals for more ranger-led programs, restored natural and cultural sites and greater volunteerism and philanthropy. They will present their recommendations to the President by May 31.

In his Fiscal Year 2008 budget, announced in February, the President proposed the largest increase in operating funds for the national parks (a \$258 million increase over Fiscal Year 2006, for a total of \$2.4 billion) and called for three new \$100 million components that could provide up to \$3 billion over 10 years in increased philanthropic, partnership and government resources for national park programs and projects.

"This is money above and beyond our regular budget," Director Bomar said. "It includes \$100 million of additional operating funds for parks each year and up to \$200 million annually for special projects and programs paid for by a combination of \$100 million in donations and a federal match of up to \$100 million."

"By the National Park Service's 100th birthday," Kempthorne said, "the initiative will have provided significant resources to restore and better protect the parks' natural, cultural, recreational and historic resources. There will be new and improved visitor centers, trails, campgrounds, and other facilities; more ranger-led programs; greater volunteerism and philanthropy. Visitors' park experiences will be significantly enhanced. In short, our national park system will be prepared for its next century of excellence in conservation, preservation and enjoyment."

The public also may provide comments on the National Park Centennial Initiative online from March 12 through March 31 at the following site: www.nps.gov/2016.

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